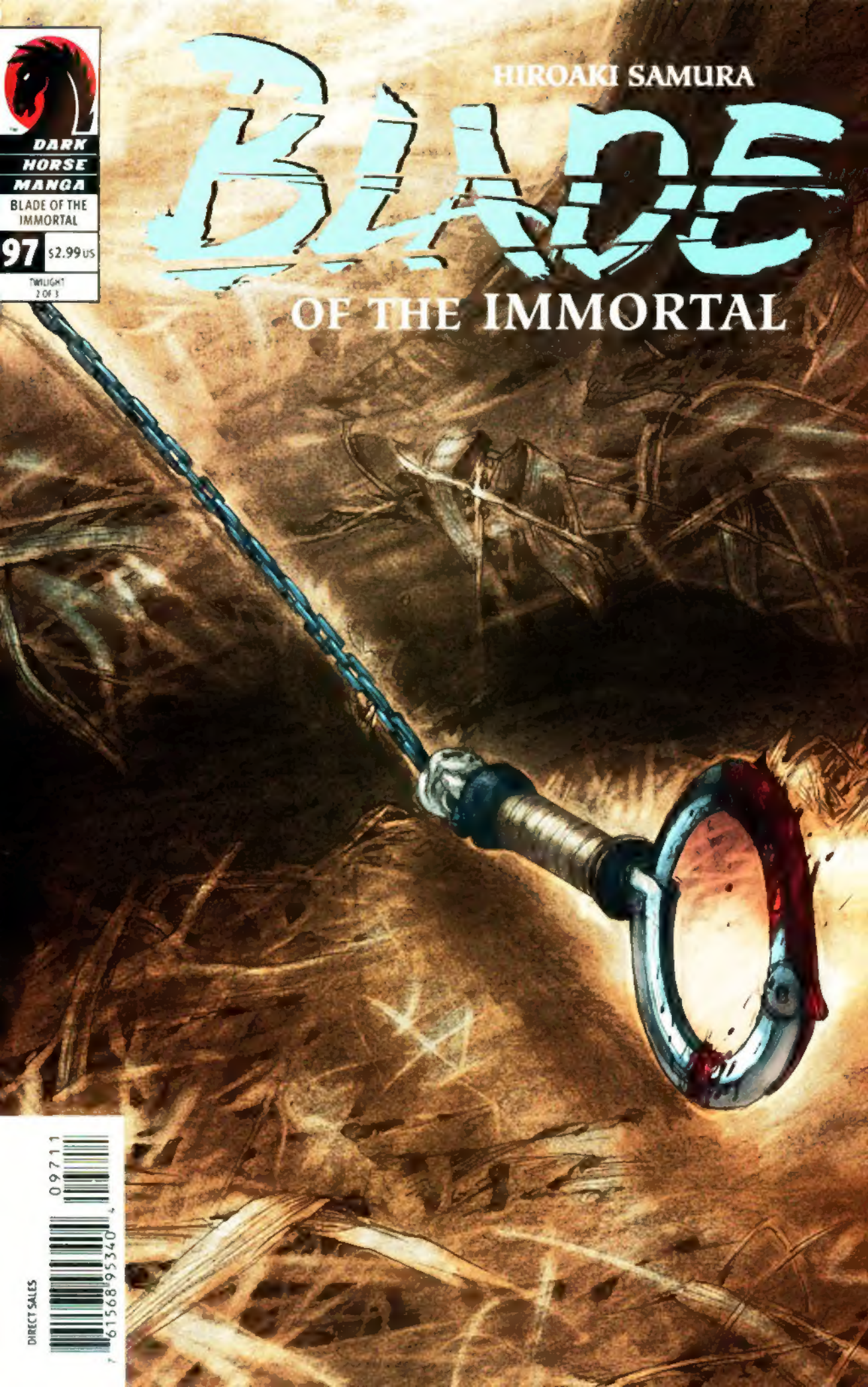
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *ronin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge.

RIN

Last heir of the *Makenchi-ryū dōjō* destroyed by the Itō-*ryū*, seeks Anotsu's death.

ANOTSU

The leader of the Itō-*ryū* sword school.

GUCHI

Mugai-*ryū* head collector.

HYAKURIN

Assassin for the shadowy Mugai-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Manipulative Mugai-*ryū* leader, serving the Shogun.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Guchi seeks to free Hyakurin from her service as a Mugai-*ryū* assassin. To do this, he must either convince Manji to join the Mugai-*ryū* — or take his life. Eager for a confrontation, Manji refuses to join, resulting in a face-off between these former allies.

designer DEBRA BAILEY *editor* PHILIP SIMON *publisher* MIKE RICHARDSON

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無限の住人

TWILIGHT

-part two-

.....
.....
WASN'T HE... OUR FRIEND?
WHY...?

Y'KNOW, I NEVER FIGURED...
...WE'D HAVE TO FIGHT EACH OTHER SO SOON.

IT'S NOT UNEXPECT-ED, AT LEAST...
MORE LOGICAL THAN YOU FIGHTING ITTŌ-RYŪ.

HOW MANY HAVE YOU BAGGED?

.....
.....
FIFTY-NINE.

...I LOSE.

I MADE A *PLEDGE* TO NEVER KILL ANYONE *BUT ITTŌ-RYŪ.*
IF I KILL YOU HERE, YOU'RE NUMBER ONE.
LET'S *BEGIN!*

GUNK
SKRANNG

.....
.....

NEXT!
YOU CAN GET ANOTHER ONE FROM YOUR HUT.

HEH HEH HEH...
GIICHI... THAT'S SOME WEAPON YOU GOT THERE.
BEEN *YEARS* SINCE I SAW ONE I *WANTED.*
SORRY, MAN. BUT WHEN I WANT A GUY'S WEAPON...?
THIRTY MINUTES LATER, IT'S *RIGHT IN HERE.*

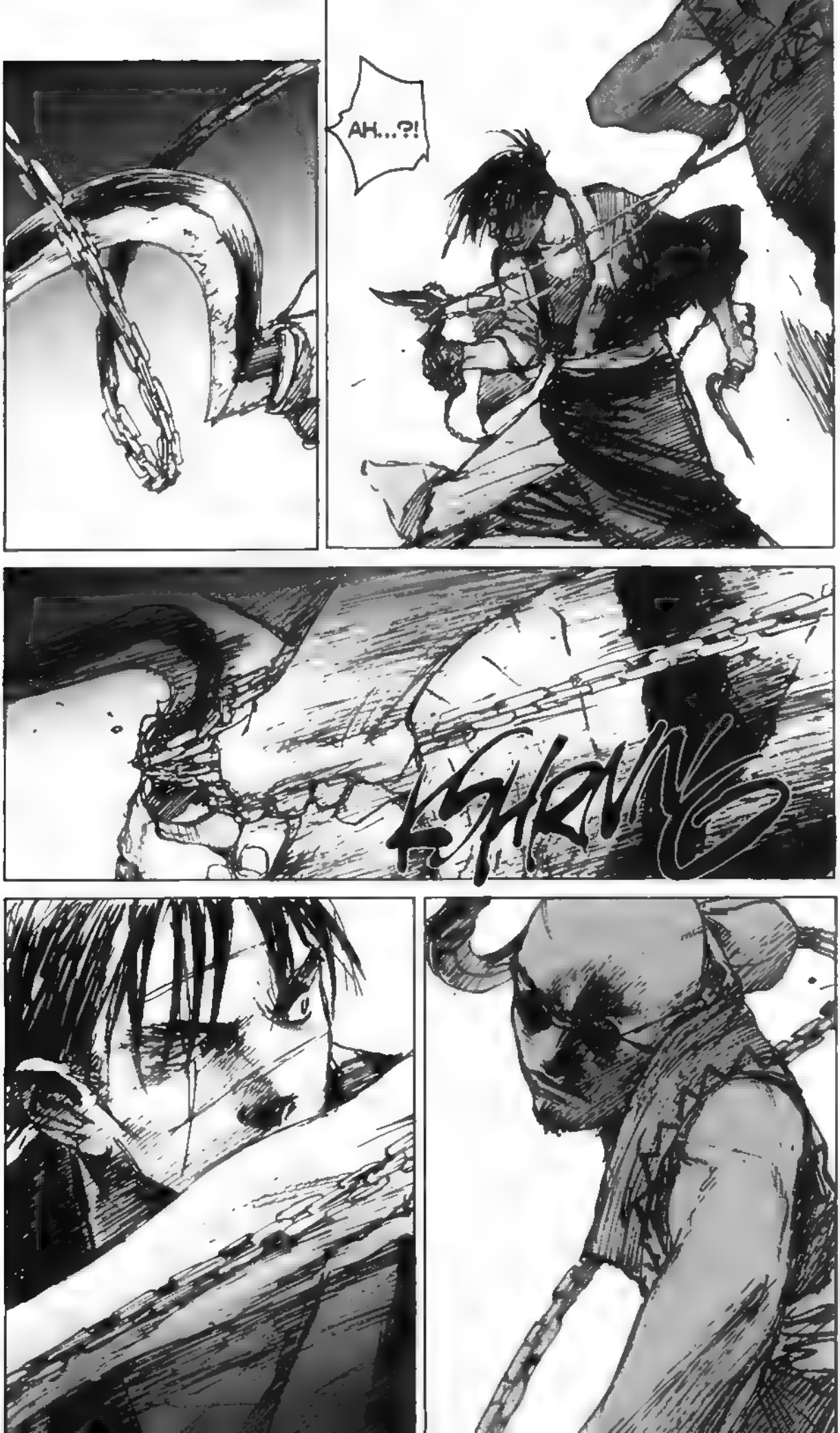
MANJI.
IF I TAKE IT IN THE NECK OR HEART, I DIE.
BUT I KNOW YOU'RE BUILT A LITTLE DIFFER-ENTLY.
WHERE IS IT?
WHAT WILL MAKE YOU DIE? I'LL AIM FOR IT.
ARE YOU CRAZY?!
YOU THINK I'D TELL YOU THAT?!
YOU MIS-UNDERSTAND.
I ASK FOR YOUR SAKE.

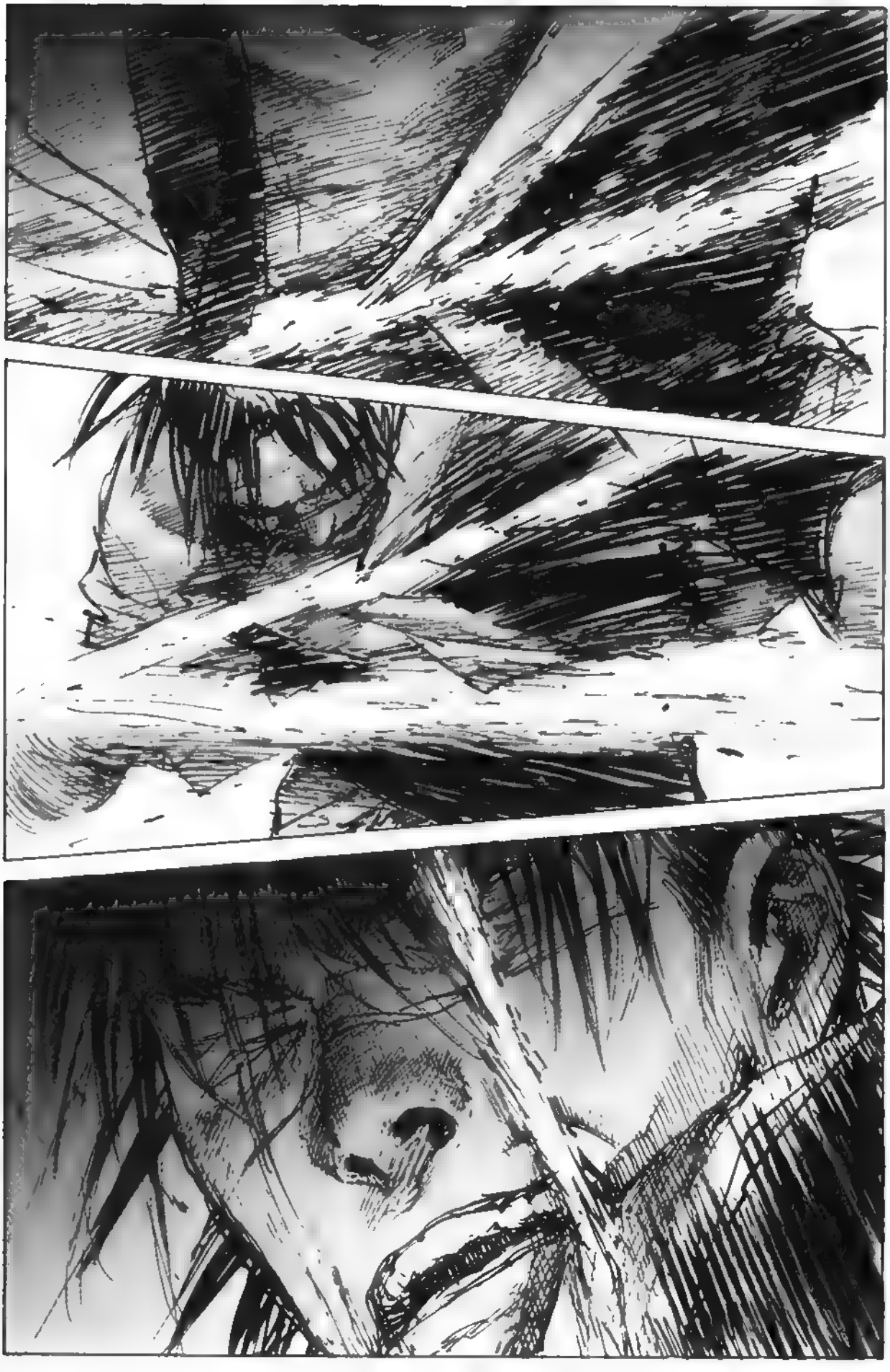
I WON'T LOSE FOR YOU, BUT LET ME SHORTEN YOUR SUFFERING.

OH, HOH... MUCHO THANKS.
VERY THOUGHT-FUL.

IT'S COOL, GIICHI... DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME.

SLICE 'EM LIKE YOU SEE 'EM! IF YOU CAN!


AH...?!
KHRUNG

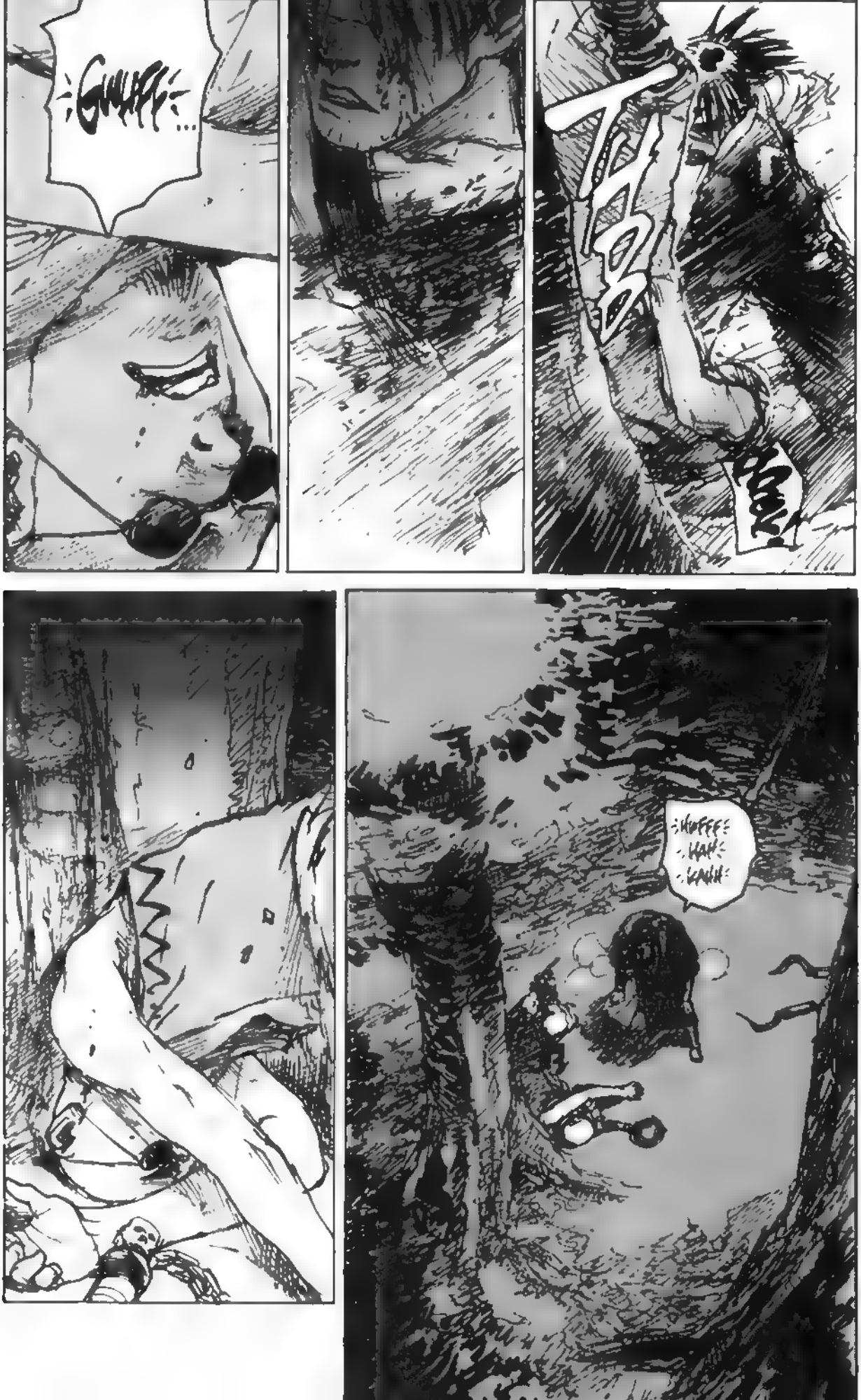


GYAHHH!!
SKSHH

EE!
FRAK

GUH!

我!!
!


:GULPH:...
THUD
:HUFFF:
:HAH:
:KAUH:

KAWROK!
KAWN!
HAUFF...
KOFF!
hahh...
haff...
hahf...
hahh...
Huhoo...

huff
huh

SHIK-
SHAAA
GOD-
DAMN...

TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

send letters to:
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222
www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com
All fan artwork, letters, and e-mails submitted become the property of Dark Horse Comics.

While Manji's getting a close look at Gilchi's "headcatcher," you can send in a letter or a piece of artwork and contribute to our DOUBLE-SIZED *Blade of the Immortal* #100 celebration! This issue will also feature rare Hiroaki Samura pin ups and the debut of "Rumble to Kaga," a *Blade* tribute comic by Filipino sensation Jhomar Soriano! Be here next month for more magnificent Samura-style schemes and screams!

—Philip Simon

GLOSSARY

***dôjô*:** a school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; a training center for swordsmanship.

***Ittô-ryû*:** the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

***Mugai-ryû*:** criminals working as assassins for the Shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets.

***ryû*:** a sword school.

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit svastika (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork:
The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue:
Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the untretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

NEXT MONTH:
Twilight, Part Three

The moonlit forest battle between Manji and Giichi concludes! A bit too confident in his mystical healing powers, Manji has survived one sloppy sword fight after another. He's recovered from severe injuries ... but never from a beheading! Giichi's fighting style and unique weapon of choice may be just what's needed to take the near-immortal warrior down. Rin, recently reunited with her beloved Manji, watches the fight from afar, while something evil lurks in the shadows with her! A *cliffhanger ending*?? You betcha! Two bloodthirsty fan-favorites clash in another stylish Samura showdown!